

Improvement Board – report from Cllr Peter Fleming (Chairman)

Improvement

Localism summit

1. Councillor Roderick Bluh was a key speaker at a summit in Birmingham on 22 March, which explored the implications of the Localism agenda. The successful event, jointly hosted by the Local Government Association (LGA) and National Association of Local Councils, looked at how the different tiers of local government could use these powers and opportunities to work more effectively together to the benefit of the local community.

Sector-led improvement

2. Since publishing *Taking the Lead*, the sector's approach to sector-led improvement, was published over a year ago, we have made significant progress in taking this agenda forward and responding to councils' requests that we find a way to manage the risk of performance failure. As part of this progress, the Board was happy to endorse a single overarching framework publication for the new sector-led approach to improvement at its meeting in March. The framework will bring together the work of the Improvement Board with that of the Children's Improvement Board (CIB) and the Towards Excellence in Council's Adult Social Care Board. The framework is currently being updated to take into account the views of the CIB, the Towards Excellence Board and the Community and Wellbeing Board, after which I look forward to sharing the framework with the sector. I have written a short piece for the Local Government Chronicle which draws attention to this work.

Leadership

National Graduate Development Programme Alumni Event

3. On 31 March 2012, I gave a keynote presentation at an alumni event for the National Graduate Development Programme (NGDP). The conference, attended by over 80 past NGDP trainees, brought together NGDP alumni and current trainees to network and share experiences. I was very impressed by the quality of the candidates and I am confident that with the NGDP attracting new talent into local government, the sector will be in strong position to tackle its challenges and provide councils with the high-calibre managers our communities need.

Productivity

Procurement

4. We have recently funded a study to examine if procurement savings can be achieved through further sharing or the development of procurement hubs. The Improvement Board expects to examine the business case for this in the autumn.

Procurement pledge

5. I am happy to announce that we have recently developed a Draft Local Government Procurement Pledge as a means of stimulating economic growth. You may be aware that the Government has issued its own draft Procurement Pledge which it envisaged the sector signing up-to; however, Board Members and I remain unconvinced that Government's pledge reflects the strengths and aspirations of the sector. The LGA's draft Pledge, which recognises local government's desire to support social enterprises and the voluntary sector, is out to consultation until 8 June 2012.

New social care and waste pilots announced

6. As announced on 5 April, we will be supporting eight new council-led projects to help improve care for the elderly and make waste collection more efficient by providing £20,000 funding. These innovative pilots should lead to improvements in the services which matter most to the public – such as rubbish collections, roads and elderly care - and will help find further savings in addition to the millions already saved by sharing services.

Local fight against fraud stepped up

7. Details of a new strategy to help councils hit back against fraudsters and prevent losses of over £2 billion a year were announced on 3 April by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and the Home Office. The strategy, 'Fighting Fraud Locally' provides a blueprint to better equip local authorities to fight a range of frauds including housing tenancy, council tax, and blue badge parking fraud. It draws on the best practices of councils already successfully tackling fraud, offers practical anti-fraud advice and is accompanied by a set of supporting online products that councils can use to more aggressively tackle fraud.

Transparency

Local Transparency

8. Councillor Tim Cheetham, the Board's lead member for Transparency, is currently working with the Transparency team and with members and local authorities to develop a policy framework for transparency, update guides on transparency and encourage authorities to make use of the data. Additionally, there are plans to work with DCLG to get a better understanding of the impact of transparency on local authorities and how the data can benefit authorities.

Innovation

Creative Councils

9. After months of hard work, the Creative Councils Programme with NESTA has now entered a vital stage as the selection process gets underway. The intention is to provide more significant support for the 5 or so best ideas. On 8 May Councillor Richard Stay and I reviewed the Action Plans of the 17 Creative Councils and made recommendations to the Creative Councils Steering Group, which in turn advises the Creative Councils Selection Panel. I look forward to being able to inform you of the successful proposals in my next update, as the Selection Panel is due to make its final decision by the end of May.

Contact officer: Dennis Skinner
Position: Head of Leadership and Productivity
Phone no: 020 7664 3017
E-mail: dennis.skinner@local.gov.uk